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Snaptivism: A collective biography of feminist snap as affective activism*

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A wedding memory

I am one with the chair and the chair becomes one with me. It compliments my body; supports my lower back and so I find myself sitting – and very comfortably seated.

The choice to sit in the chair was not mine to begin with. My choice was to show up to the event itself. But on the table in front of me, there is a small card with my name written on it. The card tells me that the chair is my designated seat for the wedding banquet that I'm attending. Around the table sit another five guests. Together, we form one of several small islands of tables in the room – each populated with family and friends of the newlywed couple.

Love songs play over the speakers. Their lyrics express heterosexual desires. The atmosphere is, perhaps not surprisingly for a wedding dinner, thick with joyfulness. I can't help but get affected a little. Even though the music – the love that is in the air – does not bear any resemblance to the love that I feel, know of, and can identify with in my own marriage.

It may be that the current mood is gay. But it is gay as in happy and not as in queer.

* We would like to thank the editors of this special section for their insightful comments on earlier versions, which helped us to refine our argument and encouraged us to take advantage of this note format

1 The authors contributed equally to this piece of work and are cited in alphabetical order.

I scan the room to find my husband located across the sea-floor that divides the party into separate parties – one at each table. I notice that him and I, and the only other non-heterosexual couple, have been split by the seating arrangement. Everybody else is paired with their opposite-sex partner. A friend of the bride, single and female, is positioned next to my husband. I feel an ache in my chest – the kind that makes you aware of the discomfort of your own body being misplaced, of belonging; but not quite.

Suddenly, the chair feels less comfortable. I'm trapped in that chair, and no matter how I reposition my body, I can't let go of a sensation of uneasiness and restlessness. The chair has turned me into a passive bystander to a setting. A setting that in that moment emerges to me as the very materialisation of a differentiating societal institution. Marriage. An institution that I, and others like me, have been excluded from historically. In most countries, we still are.

The seating plan seems to keep my husband and I – as well as the lesbian couple that are also legally married – from enjoying the recognition of our marriages on equal terms with all the other married couples that happen to be heterosexual.

My thoughts revolve around this idea(l) of marriage. I now remember why I find it problematic. As a society, we reward and honour marriage; legally and grant economic benefits. Marriage becomes a socially desirable way of living your life. And at the same time, society excludes (some groups) of people from enjoying the same privileges. This seems both unfair and absurd to me.

Am I naïve to believe that equal access – in the form of the right to same-sex marriage – would also mean equal treatment? Are queer lives simply being co-opted?

As the merry-gay music continues, I depart with my line of thought. I notice and become attuned to the dinner set-up that renders my love invisible. In this physical setting, my affection for my partner is apparently deemed less legitimate, or even irrelevant. We are unequal to that of all the heterosexual couples. Couples whose romantic feelings are omnipresent – and so readily accepted as 'right' and proper. Couples whose love every-body strives for.

I feel this physically. It is as if these couples have sucked out all air in the room and taken up all space. There's room for no deviation from that norm.

With a simple seating arrangement at a social event, I'm momentarily confined to that infamous closet. The same closet that I was expected by family, friends, and society to come out of. I am made to pass as part of the collective One rather than the Other that I am.

My Otherness, however, becomes visible time and again, as conditions force me to come out the closet again. And again. And again.

The two other couples at the table assume that I'm coupled with the woman next to me. I'm assumed heterosexual until otherwise proven. Oh, the irony! She and I are in this together, and more than they can possibly imagine. She has also been temporarily torn from her same-sex spouse. Sitting next to each other, we cannot help but constantly act as a mutual reminder of our circumstances. Our mis-

matching makes us appear 'same' to the other guests. But two wrongs don't make a right.

A photographer asks us to scoot together. We are to have our picture taken so as to capture – and immortalise – the loving moment. A moment we are forced to spend away, detached, and disentangled from our own spouses. The woman and I pose. Reluctantly. We try to shake off our conflicted feelings. So the make-believe can seem true. For the happy couple.

What else can we do? Make a scene? I keep reminding myself that it is all about the newlyweds and not me. The purpose of my attendance is to witness their love. By witnessing, I attest their social status as the quintessence of what it means to be a family.

It is as if my female table partner and I are stuck in our chairs so as to help perpetuating a heterosexually striated space. Together, the place cards and the meagre chairs have robbed us of any agency.

Or maybe we handed over our capacities to affect the situation by sitting down in the first place?

Regardless, the effect remains: we become spectators of the undoing of our subjectivities in that heteronormative space. We go through the motions, because the motions are there to go through.

My thoughts are now on the tradition of the wedding itself. Four people are silently deemed null and void; while all four people hold official roles at the wedding. I am the designated chauffeur for the newlyweds. I am the guarantor of their safe journey when they leave for the honeymoon of their dreams the following morning. The woman next to me is the toastmaster. She introduces an array of speeches, all of which represents forms of love. Forms that are, in that setting, implicitly deemed more valid than my romantic tie to my partner: familial, platonic, siblinesque. Her spouse is the gift coordinator, entrusted with the new riches of the couple. My husband is the groom's best man.

Four individuals, all of whom are noticeably visible in the wedding. All of whom have a status. And yet, by a simple act of a seating plan, our marriages are invisible.

The constant re-negotiation of this in-visibility becomes a source of frustration for me. How can we be trusted these key functions and, simultaneously, be the recipients of unequal treatment?

Heteronormative. I write the word down on a slip of paper. All guests have been tasked with summarising their experience of the day in just one word. The happy couple will then read the slips on their anniversary to commemorate the day.

I doubt they will be able to re-live my experience of the day. But my message is not intended for them. I write it so that I can let go of some of the anger that's been building up slowly. So I can feel emancipated from the chair, from the striated space. It works. Momentarily.

Soon after, the bride performs a ritual. She visits each table to 'sell' red roses to all the men. The men then hand over the rose to their spouse as a token of devotion. My husband and I get a rose each. The lesbian couple gets none.

The reason for the ritual, we are told, is for the bride to collect some spare change. This way, she has a bit in store, in case the husband – the assumed breadwinner – isn't able to provide for the family.

I wonder if the male-female seating arrangement is also to be explained away with tradition. The newlyweds have, throughout the day, been somewhat selective about what traditions to follow. For example, the bride has given a touching and heartfelt speech to her husband. Traditionally, her place is next to her husband, silent. Traditionally, the wedding is where she is re-defined and valued in terms of her belonging to him. This is, traditionally, marked with her prefix changing from miss to Mrs. Traditionally, you don't opt-in to some traditions but not all.

After the three-course meal, a line of flight appears. I can part with my chair and turn my back on the striated space. I can both literally and figuratively speaking stand on my own two feet. Stand up. For myself.

As I stretch my legs and shake off the remnants of the chair, attempting to enjoy the party, the groom approaches me. Frankly, I'm not in the mood to talk to him, yet. And the groom is drunk. I don't know if it is him or the alcohol speaking, when he urges me to show a little affection for my husband.

All I know is that I become intoxicated from his utterance and that his words point at me like the beam of an interrogation room spotlight. Is he questioning my devotion for my partner? Is he really asking of me to be affectionate and share the very intimacy that we have been cheated out of for the entire day? The affection that his other friends and family have shared seamlessly throughout every mention of love, while both I and my husband were given a companion of the opposite sex to play pretend with?

I'm not only out of words; I'm also out of air. I can't breathe. My chest is heavy with feelings of resentment. I don't know where to put my feelings.

It is as if my body is preparing me to snap even before I realise it'll happen. The snap is corporeal before consciously enacted.

I snap. Not by explaining myself, arguing, or starting a fight. I snap by turning around and leaving. I walk away with heavy and fast-paced steps. I cross the room diagonally, across a dancefloor of happy couples. It's the longest route for me. It's the closest to an exit.

That snap moment is when I re-gain agency. I withdraw myself from the wedding-assemblage and let the cold evening breeze fill my lungs with air.

Now at a distance, I also realise that the snap didn't come out of nothing. It came from something and somewhere. Everything came together in that particular moment. It was not only about the remark from the groom.

> The snap was a reaction to the entire wedding-assemblage: the room, the setup of the furniture, the music, marriage as an institution and its traditions, the other guests' small talk. All of this accumulated. Coming at me as micro-aggressions that would just make the space tighter and tighter. Until there was absolutely no room for me to be. And so, I had to explode. Or rather, implode.
>
> I could no longer contribute to keeping a cultural love-design where men and women neatly sit together so as not to break with any social norms or expectations. So as to not disturb the heterosexual matrix.
>
> Like the rest of the party I found myself to be gay, just not as in happy, but queer as in fuck them.

Introduction, background and context

A snap might be a breaking point but in the hands of Ahmed (2017a, 2017b) it can also be conceived as a creative and affirmative action. As the memory above outlines, a snap is ephemeral. Sometimes it is only in the aftermath of a snap we realised it has happened. We note that 'a body can be snap, you arrive and there is a sharp break with what came before' (Ahmed, 2017a), which asks allies in queer-feminist and anti-racist work to be aware of how their bodies might confer privilege. These were just some of the facets of the 'snap' that were considered during the Feminism, Activism, Writing! (hereafter FAW!) session on affective activism, held at Copenhagen Business School (CBS) in November 2017. During this FAW! session, numerous feminist scholars shared stories inspired by what Ahmed refers to as *feminist snap* (2017b: 198). This is not a term that is easily confined to one single definition but instead allows for a multiplicity of experience to exist within its concept. A snap 'can mean to make a brisk, sharp, cracking sound' but also 'to suffer a physical or mental breakdown' and 'to snatch or grasp suddenly and with eagerness' (Ahmed, 2017b: 189). It might mean 'to open, close, or fit together with a click' (*ibid.*: 189). It is a concept that both brings people together and cleaves them apart, that inspires but also breaks, that opens but also closes. Relevant for this note is to think of snapping as similar to a valve that helps to release the pressure built up from normative expectations. Or in Ahmed's own words as 'that moment when the pressure has built up and tipped over' (2017a) and which 'can be the basis of a revolt, a revolt against what we are asked to put up with' (*ibid.*).

In combining the words *snap* and *activism*, one of the authors (Jannick) produced the neologism snaptivism during the FAW! session on affective activism. As an example of snaptivism, Jannick shared a story about him leaving a wedding in protest of the heterosexist atmosphere. This was the first version of the wedding memory, which led the FAW! session discussion to revolve around the activist potentials of snapping. The idea of snaptivism was readily improvised upon by

other session participants, who shared their own snap moments. We wondered if we could become 'snap allies' by building a feminist support system of lending ears that are willing to listen. All these snap(py) moments shared revolved around Ahmed's (2017a) conception of 'feminist snap' that highlights the possibilities for new beginnings when snapping (although the snap itself is seldom the beginning – it is merely what's first noticed), and hence points to activism as a related concept.

After the FAW! session, we, the authors, decided to choose one of these shared snap moments and opted to explore it further by using the framework of collective biography as proposed by Davies and Gannon (2012) and others (Davies et al., 2005; Davies et al., 2013; De Schauwer et al., 2018). We felt that this framework was particularly appropriate, as it reflected most closely the open and conversational tone of the FAW! session format, but additionally provided us with a structured approach to guide our discussion. The aim was to direct a specific focus not only on the language of the snap story, but also the affectivity of it. Collective biography is a workshop format that seeks to get as close as possible to the minute details of a memory-event, drawing out its *embodied sensations* via 'collaborative attention to detail' (Davies and Gannon, 2012: 360). In the sections below, we describe how we conducted our collective biography work with the purpose of exploring the empirical phenomenon of what we call snaptivism. We dedicate the remainder of this introduction to positioning our note with the work of relevant scholars, connecting key concepts and providing the context of our snaptivist efforts.

With this note we want to further unpack the activist potential a snap moment may hold. The collective biography workshop was initially thought of as a way of intervening in the snap memory-story. As our work on the note progressed, we came to realise that the workshop was also in itself an activist endeavour in the sense that the moment could be turned into movement. The snap moment reported here should therefore not be thought of as a static representation of the snap as it really was or how it really happened. Rather, the moment – the snap wedding memory-story – is where we began to explore the movements, the repetitive citations of norms that achieve a fixed pattern of being (in accordance with the heterosexual love-design). The memory becomes material in presenting and analysing a potential moment for change, of becoming-different (non-heterosexual, snap ally, etc.). In our collaborative work, the snap becomes a way of gathering (research) material (Ahmed, 2017a) and, potentially, a means for snap stories to travel and have an effect beyond the collective biography work undertaken by us.

We propose that the collective biography framework, as suggested by Davies and Gannon (2012) and adapted for this note, is one way of providing the feminist support system that Ahmed talks about in her lecture, blog and chapter on the feminist snap. In becoming feminist ears, we are willing to hear the exhaustion of struggling to live in a world that negates your existence, we aim to create a (safe) space in which the snap can become expressive, i.e. shared rather than contained, by telling its story, collectively. Furthermore, this may alleviate or make sense of the accompanied feelings of anger, frustration, resentment. As the memory is shared, it becomes a social story and thus political (see e.g. Cahill, 2007). As the ephemeral snap gains momentum, we hope that the individually experienced moment, otherwise thought of as personal, is rethought of as having movement towards change.

We understand the re-working of snap memory-stories, by means of collective biography workshops, as both embodied and engaged research (e.g. Holck, 2018; Ashcraft, 2017). This is because our labour invokes affective feelings and reactions on behalf of everybody involved, i.e. both the original memory-holder (the one snapping) and those who work to experience the memory, namely the memory-workers (snap allies). This latter effect is created in the joint process of unpacking the moment, unfolding the story thus, in being affected by it, we become snap allies. If snapping, as Ahmed (2017a) has it, is about breaking a bond, then snaptivism is about creating new ones, among the allies, towards doing things differently. As evident from the final iteration of the wedding memory presented above, certain snap experiences are sensed through and among bodies (human as well as nonhuman relations) and can for that reason not be grasped unless we render ourselves sense-able (Ashcraft, 2017) and response-able to affect. While affectivities cannot be reduced to mere matters of feelings, emotions and moods (e.g. Ahmed, 2014) – these are all an integral part of the snap memory-story in their capacity to affect and, as such, to have a material effect (Fox and Alldred, 2017), in our case on our collective biography workshop. Looking at emotions affectively is, as Ahmed (2004) writes, a matter of investigating the actions they perform and what effects that follow from them. In this way, the memory-work allows for embodied apprehensions of the snap, including affective bodily changes.

Change is the cue that takes us back to the neologism of snaptivism. A 'snap' might be a moment experienced as individual pain but the activism undertaken in hearing the story and processing it through collective biography can perhaps mitigate some of the isolation. For Ahmed, the 'feminist snap might be how we tell a counter-story, the story that we must tell still; a story that if it is to be told requires sharp and sudden movements to get through' (2017a). Similarly, Fotaki et al. (2017: 10) note, 'feminists remind us that it is crucial for us as

organisational scholars to reiterate affect as socially situated rather than as an individual and depoliticised state of being and experience'. In both instances it is imperative to do this work together. If this is the case, engaging in collective work can help amplify the story and to create space for ephemeral movements. Coming out of the FAW! session, sensing something (had) happened in sharing those moments, the collective biography experiment aims to further develop a snap moment shared by Jannick into a collectively shared story. The story itself went through many iterations – beginning at the FAW! session and ending in this note. Our workshop was facilitated by digital meetings held among the authors of this note, in which we adopted and adapted the collective biography approach to allow for Ahmed's feminist snap.

The remainder of this note will firstly explore how we queered the collective biography framework, originating in Davies and Gannon (2012) to adopt and adapt it with our understanding of the snap. This also includes the practicalities of undertaking the workshop, acting as a guide and timeline for the project. Secondly, we reflect as a collective on the moments of affectivity through writing our responses to the workshop. Here, the text operates under 'we', with each reflection shared and discussed by each member of the group and seeking to capture the ephemeral nature of the snap as we move back and forth between moments that sat with us. Finally, we offer, (in)conclusively, some of our insights that others may wish to contemplate should they wish to similarly take on a queered collective biography approach to snapping and become snaptivists.

Research procedure: Queering collective biography

Collective biography writing is, according to Davies and Gannon (2012), a method with which to revisit and explore a particular memory-event, in a larger theoretical context that concerns itself with issues of being and becoming. Specifically, through description, the main task is 're-capturing precise details from memories by remembering key images from our past, fleeting glimpses and scents' (Zbróg, 2016: 291). Thus, through 'collaborative attention to detail' (Davies and Gannon, 2012: 360), 'material and sensory' (*ibid.*: 369), we are also to draw out embodied sensations from the event. Key in this setting is to achieve the most honest writing of a memory that originates with the holder of it, in our case the one who presents and shares their snap moment, through its further examination by those collectively present. Throughout, the idea is to avoid repetitive and boring, even worn-out stereotypical explanations, because they consolidate normative behaviours that 'keep us in place and in character' (Davies and Gannon, 2012: 358), including as individual subjects. Instead, collective memory work and writing seeks to put this subject position, specifically its

isolation 'under erasure' (*ibid.*: 357) in favour of encounters during which we work through intensities and flows that move us collectively.

Thus, the workshop format of collective biography aims to get the participating memory-workers, in our case the snap allies we become, intimately involved by encouraging continuous probing of the details of the unfolding story, and allowing them to feel moved by the truth of the memory. The snap allies come to realise that they themselves know the moment under close observation *from the inside*, which is also what the set of instructions are geared towards. Thus, to prepare for our collective biography work, we first studied the instructions as suggested by Davies and Gannon (2012). Specifically, Davies and Gannon encourage participants not only to not use clichés or offer explanations in relation to the event, but also stipulate to generally be aware of the language used, as well as to pick up and choose words that are true to the remembered subject (*ibid.*: 359).

We selected the collective biography approach as it offered us a fruitful ground to examine the body given to a text. That is, how language expands possibilities of re-writing, mutating history and drawing collective lessons. However, we also decided to experiment creatively with queering collective biography writing in order to jointly interrogate the storyteller's use of language, especially regarding the words chosen and their affective import on the listeners. In order to do such queering, we extended the instructions and participant-positions to address the collectivity of snapping. That is, by queering our method we wanted to get at and explore what had been taking shape in the room at CBS where the FAW! session took place: new subject positions. These were not entangled, yet nevertheless we no longer found and felt ourselves or our individual snap moments to be in isolation. If not entangled together, and sharing a sense of political urgency, then what?

Queering the procedures allowed us to constructively destabilise the positions of both the original memory-holder and of the memory-workers. We think of all positions as equally contributing and claiming the collective lessons of the feminist snap. In effect, the holder position might not remember exactly what happened before and/or after or what personal truth is to be drawn/felt in the aftermath of a hurtful/shameful event. Consequently, regarding the holder, we approached the temporality of the workshop as appealing to a non-linear time (layering the past, present and future of the story). Thus, rather than analysing the biography of the emergent subject of Davies and Gannon's (2012) notion of collective biography, the story itself became the protagonist, having a biography of its own. Regarding the positions of the memory-workers, we brought ourselves together around one story as snap allies instead of sharing a story each. Starting

out as listeners, we ended up as being rallied behind the one wedding memory-story as allies, because we could collectively appreciate why this snap happened, bonding over it. Both moves of queering aim to mutate how authorship and truth are distributed: no version of the story is understood to be individually authored.

The most important aspect, we argue, is to commit to certain words/expressions within the story and although uncertain, share the file containing the story amongst all participants as an active move of trust and solidarity. This move may be seen as catering to what Vachhani and Pullen (2018) conceptualise as affective solidarity. Writing about the organisation of feminist resistance to everyday sexism they specifically point to how a move away from individualising experiences towards collective empathy can help mobilising solidarity. This affective solidarity, we argue, is necessary if we are to not only understand, but also rally around individual experiences – personal snap stories – and render them collective (maybe even public) in inscribing them into the political. 'Affect is a force that places people in a co-subjective circuit of feeling and sensation, rather than standing alone and independent' – as Fotaki et al. (2017: 4) write for the *Organization* special issue concerning how critical thinking of affect comes to matter in organisation studies.

The practical details of queering collective biography

While Davies and Gannon's (2012) collective biography starts with each individual authoring an account, we started with the following practical task: decide collectively *what accounts for a (feminist) snap moment?* The interest here lies not with the examination of memory-event(s) in general, but addressing *the specificity* of a snap (as past event and as story to be told/written). We were five memory-workers[2], including the memory-holder, working through Jannick's written story (see timeline below for an overview of the different stages in our collective biography work). Focusing all our curiosity on the details of just one story resulted in credible presentations of experiences (memories) in that we could discuss and question gaps or elements that seemed peculiar or untrustworthy. We could provide associative feedback by connecting to the story through own experiences of snapping in similar situations. Obtaining this sort of familiarity with the story, and its development, leads to what we felt were collective stakes appearing. This state of collective buy-in rendered it possible for us to begin exemplifying and illustrating the story based on emotional percept and the sensory impressions. Such descriptions were achieved by answering

2 Of which four of us decided to continue with the collective biography writing for this note. We would, however, like to thank our fifth memory-worker, Cansu Grüner-Birdal, for her thoughtful contribution during the workshop.

questions related to how the memory-holder felt about certain things happening in the story, where in his body he felt it, what scents he registered, etc.

In preparation, each workshop participant read a shared text (an early version of the wedding memory), forming questions for the collective biography work, which took place online due to the different geographical location of each of us. However, this preparatory phase did not preclude the possibility of spontaneous lines-of-questioning popping up during the workshop. When we started the online session, one member read the guidelines aloud (as presented in this section) and, collectively, we decided the end point would be the moment when all of the attendees felt they knew the experience of the memory as if it were their own. We felt we would instinctively know when this occurred. Jannick read the early version of the memory to us and then we began to ask questions about gaps, curiosities and inconsistencies in the memory. Then, Jannick worked on his notes and a video recording from the workshop to present us with the outcome: the final version of the wedding memory as presented above. From the first version of the memory (the oral story shared at the FAW! session more than six months ago at that point) to this last iteration, we all felt that we did know this memory as our own (we elaborate on this in the next section).

The collective work undertaken allowed us to pull apart the memory from the first utterance inside a room at CBS (during the FAW! session), which was left unquestioned, to a story that had been built upon and rigorously looked at from many sides. The outcome was not necessarily that we felt we knew how to act differently if a similar situation occurred. Rather, the deep knowledge afforded from the telling and re-telling of the story created a sense of comradery and support. The collective biography work revealed how snapping cannot be thought of as a singular event. Even though we focused our attention on one memory-story it became clear to us that to live our queer-feminist lives, to be feminist scholars in the academic life-world, requires continuous snapping to simply be. By building a community working collectively on a past memory we re-formulated it in a way that displaced Jannick as the problem and centred him as the snaptivist. The memory had '[begun] to register and resonate affectively in the bodies of the listeners' (Davies and Gannon, 2012: 360) and thus brought the workshop to a close with each participant feeling part of the snap story, becoming snap allies in the process.

Timeline of our collective biography workshop:

- 20-21 November 2017: The snap story is shared for the first time as a short remark during a session about affective activism at the Feminism,

Activism, Writing! (FAW!) workshop at Copenhagen Business School (CBS).

- 22 February 2018: We, the authors, have our first online meeting where we decide upon the one snap story we want to work on (the wedding memory). Jannick begins to write down his snap moment.

- 5 April 2018: We have our second online meeting to explore appropriate theory and methods. Jannick continues working on his snap memory.

- 18 May 2018: Jannick shares his written snap moment during our two-hour long online collective biography workshop and the rest of the authors, the snap allies, start probing the memory-story.

- 28 May 2018: We have a follow-up online meeting to re-work the final details of the written wedding memory. We read it out, re-edit and interpret the snap to get a deeper sense of the story and the forces 'behind' the given situation.

On becoming snap allies

In this section, we describe in more detail how *doing* this collective biography work on the snap memory-story affected us and how we affected it. The snippets shared below may be understood similarly to the drawings that emerged from De Schauwer and colleagues' (2018) workshop: in them, we do not offer our reflections, but rather seek to capture in writing a snapshot of us affectively resonating and rallying, as a snap-allied collective, around a shared memory that now has become a part of us. Even more so, with our writing (which came more natural to us than drawing) about how we proceeded during the workshop, we aim to capture the ephemeral nature of the snap, our discussions and the process overall. Therefore, we offer our affective insights similarly to how they emerged during our workshop, flowing spontaneously, zipping back and forth between different story parts that did something to us, animated us, angered us, even, over which we bonded, laughed, and became allies – as also illustrated in the snapshot below from the video recording of the workshop.

Figure 1: The authors during the workshop, in full affect

The wedding memory, initially shared as a spontaneous comment within the safe space provided by the FAW! session on affective activism, has acquired its own biography. In this process, we discovered how much hinterland there can be to a single comment and how our queered collective biography approach also allows those who were previously uninvolved to appreciate the importance and depth of a moment shared by someone else. In turn, we became snap allies. Yet, this is just one comment out of many shared at the FAW! session that we could have explored in more depth. What more did we leave behind?

Particularly striking to us is how we, the memory workers and snap allies as women, could feel into a different instance of denied privilege: from being discriminated against due to our gender (a naturally recurring topic in the FAW! session) to physically experiencing discrimination as a homosexual man. There it is, the odd sensation in our guts that comes when the body registers that something is not quite right, even before the brain can properly articulate it. The sense of astonishment we all experience when discussing the seating arrangement! Writing down the word *heteronormative* as a résumé of the evening strikes us, almost like a portent, as part of the build-up to snapping. What to do? There is no place to go, because the 'right' place is already taken! Oh, the repressed repulsion towards the alcohol-infused groom at the end of the

memory. We all can feel indignation and anger, we are all affected as if we had been there with Jannick in that room… wait, are we in a Pensieve?![3]

At the same time, doing this memory work means so much more than opening us up towards the experience of someone else. We become immersed in the discrimination experienced as a significant event, not something to be brushed over. Its infuriating quality lies in the self-righteousness with which our ally is mistreated. And what about those who differ much more visibly from the mainstream assumption of *what is right* or *how things should be*? The exercise of re-living, a(ffe)cting Jannick's memory simultaneously sharpens our awareness of daily, casual injustice and naturally leads us authors to discuss privilege, speaking up and snapping for/with others, particularly those unable to do so themselves.

One recollects on the moment of snapping, making it public and sharing it again, in a different space, at a different time. The repetition makes a difference every time the body of text starts expanding as the possibility for articulating the stakes in snapping are emerging, because of it. Repeated and recollected by the one to which the moment belongs, by listening and asking questions, making suggestions, telling our own stories, we make the moment reach and rock backwards and forwards together. Movement. Repeated and recollected together we extend the moment in the process; embroidering it into a richer narrative at every turn we take.

For instance, it emerged that red roses played a part in this particular snap, which we seized on together, asking for their significance in adding to the accumulation of pressure that built up to the moment. Tradition to some, the bride sells roses to the men in the room, which they gift to their female partners. This exchange highlights how, while being a heteronormative event, heterosexuality and gender create exclusions at weddings that gay spouses are not able to participate in on equal terms, with both Jannick and his husband taking roses but feeling unable to give them to one another not being of the opposite sex. The group found this expanded part of the story similarly stifling, empathising with the tension created in such a ritual. Listening, probing for more details about the ritual of the red roses, we all started to feel increasingly outraged at it, understanding how it contributed to the snap, and sensing what it must have felt like, being moved by it. Yet without losing perspective in the process, which is what happens in collective biography, and also what it proposes and aims for, given its ontological and epistemological underpinnings.

3 An object from the magical universe of Harry Potter, used to review stored memories.

During the collective biography workshop, there were boundaries that existed between us still, however moved we were, which became apparent most obviously when there was a pause in the absence of the one who snapped. Jannick suddenly disappeared from our online meeting because his laptop ran out of battery. Most significantly, in the gap (lasting a few minutes), we questioned what we would have done, differently. Would we have intervened in the ritual, disrupted it by not participating in the exchange, or by repeating it with a difference? Nevertheless, we were connected still, to the moment, to what happened, including to the one who snapped. Being distinct bodies, our boundaries did not prevent us from feeling what happened, because they were porous ones that allow for 'the transmission of affect' (Brennan, 2004), the flow among us that connects us, without losing sight of each other or of what happened. Rather than becoming entangled, we bonded, and became affective snap allies, which accounts for how we relate, collectively. This collectivity explains what else productively happened embryonically in the room when we initially shared the snap moments at the FAW! session, and sensed there was more to them as well.

Listening to Jannick relate to us his story that we had only read bits and pieces of beforehand, before our collective biography workshop, moved us in a way that the words on the screen had not. Whether that means that our eyes are corrupted against affect and being affected, having been taught to observe without getting too close, to keep a critical distance, to not be affected, or care, we don't know. For ears also involve distance in that we can be hearing something that takes place further removed from us, unlike our sense of smell, although we can sense a whiff of fear that suggests distance too, so as not to suggest that smell is a sense of proximity exclusively. But our ears unlike our eyes and like our nostrils and mouth are openings that suggest we are open to others, that open us up to others, whether we like it or not. Our eyes can only leak from their openings to *demonstrate* affect, being affected by reflecting what they see. In the case of our ears, short of not listening, we have to take in what happened as it finds its way around our own experiences. Like this, we get in touch, and can be touched by the one telling the story.

Listening to Jannick unfold his story, one of us interrupted with thoughts about the reference to his husband, jarred, an embodied sensation too. Jarred, she was reluctant to bring up how can one feel (increasingly) ill at ease at an event and during a ritual that one has participated in? Or rather, perhaps, what about this wedding makes it disturbing, offensive, perhaps even oppressive, to the point of snapping? We debated briefly how the weight of tradition could explain it, as being the problem, like traditional table-seating, which Jannick indeed said they did not abide by at their wedding. Another example would be the rose tradition as

part of the ritual, which as out of date from a feminist point of view, dragged the wedding behind the times, tearing the gap and the difference between the two weddings.

'I'm trapped in that chair and no matter how I reposition my body I can't let go of a sensation of uneasiness and restlessness' (from the wedding memory). Another huge moment that resonated with us was Jannick's almost claustrophobic connection to the chair. In many ways, he might have swapped places and broken the seating code. But these visible actions would have signalled a larger protest, in a space that asks you to be an audience not an actor. We felt the tightening of the chest and the raising frustration at being kept in place by social nicety, especially as Jannick and the other couple mentioned are both legally married yet were separated by this outmoded traditional seating. In terms of sharing the memory collectively, we felt the physicality of this moment: the restlessness; the discomfort; the passivity. Perhaps this is because we shared similar moments where we have longed to visibly show dissent but have been unable to due to the larger social structures that we find ourselves placed in.

Watching the story build up from a comment in the FAW! session in November 2017 to a full narrative in this note more than half a year later has been a unique experience. It allowed us to get to grips with a fleeting moment in time and, during the course of the process, to become snap allies. This allyship conveys more than just conversation. We picked, ripped, added, questioned, poked and prodded the story. We dwelled on word choices and objects mentioned. Collectively, we spurred each other on to different trains of thought, pointing out moments that another may not have noticed. This is what it meant to us to experience the written memory as if it were our own. In queering the collective biography workshop, we freed ourselves up to work on one memory in intense detail. Those who supported the memory became snap allies as they worked and re-worked the moment, aiming to de-centre Jannick as the 'one heard as shouting' (Ahmed, 2017a) to become the one heard and understood in detail.

Having snap allies caring for the story (by actively listening, asking questions, re-presenting experiences from other perspectives and with words that seemed more accurate or true to the memory) helped Jannick as the original memory-holder exploring different aspects that had not necessarily appeared to him as relevant to the building up of the snap moment. He, in other words, became aware of a broader spectrum of fragments, how they all contributed to the story as a whole, and how this much more nuanced and hence increasingly complex memory was material in terms of its capacity to affect him differently. The rose ritual is but one example. It wasn't part of the original memory-story shared during the FAW! session at CBS, nor was it mentioned in the first written

versions of the snap moment. It was the supportive probing from the snap allies that saw it materialising.

Most importantly, Jannick came to realize that his inarticulate snap could be thought of as less conscious than he initially believed when presenting it at the FAW! session. Not that we want to introduce a dualistic understanding of reason and thought as the opposite of affect and emotion. Rather, we have, in retrospect, come to think of the story as an example of what Sara Ahmed (2014: 145) calls 'compulsory heterosexuality'. That is, how the narrative of heterosexual coupling as an ideal – which not surprisingly was omnipresent at the hetero-wedding from the snap memory – shaped, if not what Jannick's body could be, then at least what it, to a certain extent, could do. The latter is a non-deterministic view and raised questions about whether Jannick could or should have done something differently. These questions popped up among the snap allies during the part of the collective biography workshop where Jannick was gone for a couple of minutes due to technical issues and were for that reason not addressed properly. They do, however, seem relevant to get a deeper understanding of the affect economies (Ahmed, 2004) at play in the wedding memory. We, therefore, end this section dwelling on these questions, presenting what we, in line with Ashcraft (2017), call an embodied critique of the wedding-assemblage.

To perform this embodied critique, we return to the chair that started the memory. The original memory-holder found the chair to play a non-trivial role in the memory because his bodily experiences were attached to that chair; his emotions were directed towards it as an object. Similarly, Sara Ahmed (2014) mentions a chair to exemplify and associate with the feeling of being comfortable (or not). She argues that comfort is about the fit between body and chair (object). She explains how her comfortable chair is not necessarily comfortable to you or to us. The chair has taken shape from the bodies that have previously sunk into it, making it awkward for differently shaped bodies. So, to be comfortable is, according to Ahmed (2014: 145), to 'be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins'. Or, in this case, where the body ends and the chair begins. Body and chair become one and the same.

Now, back to the wedding memory: A heteronormative environment or space like the wedding memory is comfortable for those who can inhabit that norm.

But as Ahmed (2014: 146) also points out, this availability of comfort for some, in this case heterosexual bodies, depends on the labour of others (non-heterosexual bodies) and the burden of concealment. She states that: 'Comfort may operate as a form of "feeling fetishism": some bodies can "have" comfort, only as an effect

of the work of others, where the work itself is concealed from view' (Ahmed, 2014: 149). In this case, heterosexual bodies get to be comfortable in their chairs, while non-heterosexual bodies labour to conceal their discomfort.

The chair reminds us how the heterosexually-striated space was already impressed upon by such bodies that sink comfortably into their chairs. While Jannick could not sink into his or the social space without a sense of discomfort or a feeling of disorientation. Jannick's non-conforming body clearly was out of place, which called for the emotional labour on his part. Eventually, his body and the chair turned out to be incompatible.

Thus, this wedding memory is not a happy one. The snap can therefore be seen as an affective act of killing joy or getting in the way of a happiness that does not have the agreement of the original memory-holder (Ahmed, 2014: 224-225). Back to the question: could or should Jannick have done something differently? Let us paraphrase Ahmed: Jannick's discomfort in itself was about him inhabiting the normative space differently.

(In)conclusion

'A snap is not a starting point, but a snap can be the start of something' (Ahmed, 2017b: 194). Our experimenting with queering the collective biography workshop allowed us to investigate what leads up to our snap while simultaneously becoming and moving forward as snap-allies to the original memory holder. Put differently, we find our queered approach to collective biography helpful to intertwine different strands of time between the memory and its initial memory holder as well as the different memory workers with their own pasts, presents and futures.

In so doing, our message was deliberately presented in a format that differs from what may be considered usual in academia. Breaking free of some of the constraints that scientific writing contains enabled us to engage differently, more freely and actively, with the snap as a form of activism. We feel that this allowed us to develop better insights and to communicate them in a different, hopefully more accessible manner. Therefore, we also contribute to a recent movement with an interest in writing differently (Gilmore et al., 2017).

In lending our ears to Jannick, in listening to him answering our questions and working with him to turn the snap-moment into a snap memory-story, one in which we now all break bonds (Ahmed, 2017a), the queered collective biography process becomes empowering. We therefore find the queered collective biography an inclusive and effective way to process and come to terms with one

certain instance. Committing to one memory, instead of working on multiple stories (cf. Davies et al., 2005; Gannon and Davies, 2007; De Schauwer et al., 2018), was helpful for us to get deeply into one snap moment in a way that allowed others to engage even if they came from different backgrounds or were not comfortable to share their own snap stories publicly.

This of course links to the ongoing issue around how and which stories to choose for collective biography work (Bansel et al., 2009; Davies and Gannon, 2012), to which we cannot provide a final answer, which, admittedly, was not the aim of our experimenting. Scrutinizing a single story, however, had each of us remembering and relating to our own, personal snap moments, and, despite some of them remaining unspoken, their perceived similarity to elements of Jannick's snap moment validated them and incorporated them as part of now 'our' wedding memory. We can then identify this memory-experience as *shared* (rather than merely personal), as social and therefore as political (Cahill, 2007). This is why this process was empowering for all of us, as we were all able to inscribe the personal into a collective political. Thus, the value of becoming snap allies means that our evocative anecdotes may contribute towards a larger purpose, giving the single snap story more resonance, making it intensely felt and thereby real (Davies and Gannon, 2012: 360).

We also want to point out that our queered approach allowed us to transgress borders by taking on and giving up privilege in a way that was perceived as moving on an emotional level and provided eye-opening experiences for all involved. Collective biography seems to work well in learning/teaching environments (Gannon and Davies, 2007) and we can imagine that this queered approach we put forth could be fruitful for use in the classroom or for other teaching purposes, in particular with more diverse groups.

Moreover, groups of memory workers may not necessarily have to be collocated. For our work on the wedding memory shared here, we mostly adhered to online communication: the workshop and surrounding conversations were held using Skype as a platform, written texts were shared via email and online platforms that enabled simultaneous editing. We were surprised by how well this worked for us, although we do of course acknowledge the benefit of working on a topic we all had a mutual interest in.

At the end of this, what did we gain? We find ourselves connected to an informal network of scattered snap allies and, as we hope, are more aware to take notice of and prepared to call out heteronormativity, inequality and exclusion when we next encounter it. We became aware of the fact that our snaps have power, that

they are a form of activism – snaptivism. In this spirit, we encourage our readers to become snaptivists and, collectively, give a biography to their feminist snaps!

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